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We've Got A Secret . . .

NOBODY CAN ACCUSE THE Central Intelligence Agency of overspending, because nobody seems to know how much it spends. Some senators raised questions about the CIA's super-secret (\$4 billion?) budget last week, and were told to mind their own business.

There are a couple of folks in Washington who claim to know what the CIA's allowance is, but they aren't talking. Whether they really know or simply want other people to think they do — they're keeping the secret, either way.

One of the I've-got-a-secret senators is John Stennis of Mississippi, who often sees money matters in patriotic terms, and is a man of no small faith. "If you're going to have an intelligence agency," said Sen. Stennis, "you've got to shut your eyes and take what comes."

Well, we have shut our eyes, and we've taken what has come: the Bay of Pigs, a U.S. invasion of Santa Domingo, a few coups in Latin America, assorted assassinations of enemy agents (or suspected double agents) in two hemispheres and other hard-to-explain goings-on around the world — not to mention Vietnam. . . .

If it's too much to ask for the American people to know what the CIA is up to, we should at least have some idea how much of our money is being spent to do it. Whatever the investment, the dividends haven't been very encouraging to date.

That is, unless you view them as Sen. Stennis suggests, with both eyes shut tight.